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ABSTRACT

The eight articles in this focused journal issue are concerned with integrating reading, writing, and thinking, with varying attention to other language processes such as listening and speaking. The titles and authors of the articles are (1) "Does What You Read Influence How You Write?" by Dennis Adams; (2) "Dictation: Building Listening, Writing, and Reading Skills Together," by Sandra Stotsky; (3) "The Case for Complete Sentence Answers to Questions," by Judith Knapp Boyce; (4) "Review Writing: A Practical Application of Bloom's Taxonomy," by Elizabeth Carros Keroack; (5) "But What About (Gulp) Spelling?" by Linda Tilgner; (6) "All About Me Metaphors" by Maria T. Valeri and Sharon Disabato; (7) "Using the Newspaper to Strengthen the Reader-Writer Relationship of Middle School Students," by Margery Staman Miller and (8) "It Has to be a Poem, This Idea I Have...," by Rae N. Iverson. (EL)

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Integrating Reading, Writing, and Thinking

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the Leaflet

THE LEAFLET

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The Leaflet

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Notes on this Issue:

All of the articles in this issue of *The Leaflet* are concerned with integrating (or re-integrating) reading, writing, and thinking, with varying attention to other language processes such as listening and speaking. Some of the articles discuss the reciprocal nature of the reading and writing processes, some the relationship of thinking to writing, but all point to the necessity of tying language arts instruction together by centering instruction on the verbal thought processes from which reading, writing, speaking, and listening flow. This collection appears to reflect a new "practical" psycholinguistic approach to English teaching. The hope for an integrating theory of language arts instruction lies in a psycholinguistic model of language process and development, and the practical exercises in this issue represent attempts to turn theory into practice. In their emphasis on integration of language processes in the classroom, all of these articles remind us that when we teach any language skill (or art) we must be cognizant of the effect of that language instruction on the other language processes which our students are developing. This collection of articles is for any teacher who is confused about the practical implications of the new psycholinguistic theories of language development; the articles range over K-12, but most are applicable with a little creative forethought to any level of instruction.

Philip M. Anderson

Does *What* You Read Influence *How* You Write?

Dennis Adams

The answer to the question posed in the title is *yes*, what we read really does have a direct bearing on the way we write.

Much of what is written contains features of what the author has read

Many problems in writing relate to poor reading—both are basic language processes that influence one another in perceptible and imperceptible ways. On a personal level, you can occasionally identify specific readings that have influenced the vocabulary, thinking, and the linguistic structure of what you write. In asking adult student teachers, in a summer workshop, to bring in the book that had the most influence on their thinking-writing style we ended up with everything from *A Guide to Bartending* (not serious) to *Bear Bryant's Approach to Football Coaching* (very serious). This writer was able to trace back certain present day writing inclinations to a book read in third grade—*Paddle to the Sea*. The story involved a geographical adventure through Canada, the Great Lakes, the east coast of North America, and finally across the Atlantic to France. After reading that book the thinking-writing process, for better or for worse, was never quite the same again. Although the book wasn't particularly good literature, my own writing started to include references to maps and charts that went beyond geographical vocabulary with complex language patterns to interest in diverse cultures. My knowledge of the world had been indelibly altered and my horizons had risen from a small village community to include different regions, cultures, and countries. A whole new dimension had been opened up in a way that has influenced me to this day—through two overseas Fulbright grants to writing about diverse geographical locations.

Many authors acknowledge the influences of others on the ideas and structures they write with. About once a year *The New York Times* asks a dozen or so major American novelists to list the recently published books that they have read. Some cite the impact of these books on their own imagination and work—this seems perfectly appropriate since good art (and science) is often an original synthesis of what has already been thought out. Some

writers are quite concerned about this—one, Norman Mailer, seems to fear some kind of intangible influence on his own writing. Consequently, he says that he doesn't read any contemporary writing but his own. But even he admits to being influenced by a preceding generation of novelists.[1]

Writers for *The New York Times*, Associated Press, the *New York Review of Books*—in fact almost any journal—tend to follow very specific linguistic features of what they have previously read in those newspapers, wire services, or journals. That is not the editing process; many writers actually study the linguistic features of a target publication and structure their writing accordingly—some writers go through a similar process at a less conscious level. Much of what we learn about how to write is implicit and it would be difficult to identify the sources, yet they exert a powerful hold over our writing.

Children's writing tends to follow the specific format of their basal reading text

In an informal survey of school districts we found that children spent a great deal of their total reading time with basal readers. It seemed that much of what they learned about their language came from those books and that those children who had textbooks that followed a more elaborate format seemed to use a more elaborate structure in their writing.

Eckhoff is in the process of gathering empirical data on the differences in the writing patterns between children who used the *Open Court* reading series as the primary reading text and those who used the *Ginn 720* series. Her analysis of the children's writing indicates that 25% of the *Ginn* children, compared to 6% of the *Open Court* children write one sentence per line. She also discovered that children used the format of their readers as a model for how to punctuate and the Ginn model of one sentence per line seemed to interfere with their learning to punctuate correctly. Even style, such as the way the *Ginn* series started many sentences with "And," and used the word "too" at the end of the sentences, was the major influence on how children developed as writers. There were variations in the writing of the children in both groups, but strong trends were spotted that indicated that the features of the model set by both basal readers were reflected in children's writing. Perhaps the most important finding was that children who used the reading series with the most elaborate linguistic structures tended to write more complex stories. Children seemed to internalize specific linguistic features of their reading textbook. Those with the least elaborate text wrote with the least elaborate structures—those with the more elaborate text wrote with more elaborate structures.[2]

By having children spend the bulk of their reading time going through basal readers that concentrate on sub-skill teaching through tightly controlled vocabulary, sentence structure and context (to say nothing of the simplistic thinking patterns) we may very well have taken away the good models of how English should be written. All of this does not automatically rule out the use of the less complex reading textbooks—rather it points to the fact that they may interfere with skill in writing, *unless* children spend more time reading from materials which provide good elaborate models of how the English language should be written.

Children should be provided with a wide range of reading experiences—and be permitted to use them in their own way

Good writers of a language do not simply copy a list of all possible sentences, drawn from reading, each time they wish to write something. (Although paraphrasing is a perfectly acceptable writing device.) Rather they understand and produce sentences never before read—but the influence of past reading is there. In fact, this sentence contains a great deal that has never been written before, but something I first read years ago (by Chomsky) has influenced both the thinking and the linguistic structure.[3]

A rich literature and reading program is essential to good writing

Stotsky, in her review of the literature, finds from several studies that additional reading is at least as good as grammar in improving the grammatical structure of writing. In fact, students who did additional reading made as much or more improvement in grammar, usage, and other writing concerns, than those who studied formal grammar. And, surprisingly, students who did only additional reading did as well or better than students who had additional writing practice in improving writing.[4] It seems that writing programs are not nearly as effective if they exist in a reading vacuum. In fact, whenever possible, it is a good idea to point out to students published authors who use a similar type of sentence, paragraph, and story construction.

Conclusion

What we read has a strong influence on how we write; sometimes we can trace the influence on writing style, most often it is just there. We now have research data which indicates that children's writing tends to follow the specific format of their basal reading text. These findings indicate that educators and publishers need to concern themselves with moving children beyond skill building and provide students with good models of written English. In order to write in an elaborated manner, children need elaborated structures in what they read. This can be accomplished by building such structures

into the reading textbooks or by making sure that a rich literature program is given as much attention as controlled sub-skill building readers, or both. And teachers must model good reading/writing behavior—if you can't write when the children do, write it out before. And if they share it, you share it. The cliché about teaching, "you never know where your influence stops" applies to the relationship between reading and writing.

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Footnotes

[1]*The New York Times*, Book Review Section, June 6, 1981.

[2]Eckhoff, Barbara, Forthcoming Doctoral Dissertation, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

[3]Chomsky, C. "Stages in Language Development," *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 42, No. 1, pp. 3-4, 1972.

[4]Stotsky, Sandra, "A Review of the Relationship Between Reading and Writing: Direction for Future Research." Unpublished version of papers presented at NCTE Conference (Boston, Nov. 81) and IRA Conference (Chicago, April 82).

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Dictation: Building Listening, Writing, and Reading Skills Together

Sandra Stotsky

What is dictation? The kind of dictation this paper discusses is not the dictation of isolated spelling words for a spelling test. Nor is it the dictation of students' stories or ideas for teachers to transcribe. It is the dictation of well-written, interesting, and complete passages from literature or non-literary informational prose for students to transcribe and is, at the surface level, a way to teach spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, and handwriting in a meaningful context. At a deeper level, it is a highly structured way to give students practice in listening to, writing, and then reading worthwhile vocabulary and ideas or information in complete sentences in connected discourse. Thus, it is an exercise that contextualizes important skill work and integrates listening, writing, and reading. Although dictation is a frequent practice in many other countries, it disappeared as a regular classroom practice in America many years ago. In recent years, however, it has been recommended in this country as a valuable exercise for improving writing skills at all educational levels (e.g., Corbett, 1971; Schofer, 1977; Stotsky, 1977; New York City Board of Education, 1980). Unfortunately, most teachers are unfamiliar with dictation practice, and I have frequently been asked in in-service presentations to describe how a dictation is given. Therefore, the primary purpose of this paper is to outline procedures for giving a dictation based on my own and my student teachers' experiences in giving them. The paper also suggests additional reasons for including dictation practice in a modern language arts curriculum.

Selecting Passages for Dictation

Well-written passages for dictation can easily be found in the unadapted literary and non-literary informational selections that students read in their regular reading program. It is important that the reading level of a passage be close to the students' reading level so that its ideas and vocabulary are within their reach. Unless the whole class can benefit from the same dictation passages, dictation groups might be similar to reading groups.

The length of the passage depends upon the grade level and capability of the students. It is better, generally speaking, to begin with short passages of about three to four sentences in order to work out a smooth procedure for regular use. It is also best not to

use passages with dialogue (unless punctuation for dialogue is the specific learning goal for the dictation), as the language of dialogue is not especially enriching; third-person narrated passages or informational passages are much more satisfactory. Before a passage is given, the entire passage should be marked off in syntactic groups appropriate for the students' span of attention.

Preparing Students for a Dictation

Students should clear their desks of all papers and books and assume a good writing position. A dictation lesson gives the teacher an excellent opportunity to observe all his or her students' writing habits; it becomes remarkably easy to spot students holding their papers or pencils in inappropriate ways. Left-handed students may never have been told that they could avoid the strain of "hooking" their hand if their papers were slanted down from right to left instead of from left to right as they are for right-handed students.

The use of margins should be requested at the beginning of each dictation; this practice can help them develop the habit of leaving margins in all written work. Also, if students are asked to skip every other line in their first dictations, it is easier for them to make insertions when omitted words are discovered. Before the first dictation is given, the teacher should explain clearly what procedures he or she will use.

Giving the Dictation

A dictation is usually read three times. The first reading is designed to acquaint students with the meaning of the selection; they should listen carefully but not write. Difficult proper nouns may be written on the chalkboard so that they do not serve as obstacles to fluent writing. Then the entire passage should be read slowly according to the syntactic phrases that have been marked off, with a pause after each one while the students write. There should be no repetitions. This is critical for developing their span of attention. Of course, the pace of reading and the length of the phrases should be adjusted for different ability groups, but students should be warned in advance that no repetition is allowed during the second reading. Punctuation may or may not be given orally depending on the learning focus of the dictation. In the earliest grades, telling the students "end of sentence" when the end of a sentence has been reached may be helpful and should automatically clue them into capitalizing the next word.

For the third reading, the passage should be read at normal speed. Students should be asked to check for omitted or superfluous words, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

Correcting the Dictation

To make the dictation a learning experience, not a testing session, students must make their own corrections by proofreading from

Dictation

It must be morning for I hear the morning voices.

I have been dreaming of a sound that always follows [illegible] but is not in words. I thought the sun rose so big and I felt that floating in the air.

Now I am awake and I like to hear voices. My sister [illegible] a guitar. My sister says it is little and shape and big. She looks playing on them.

Dictation February 1929

It must be morning.

First hear the morning voices and then hearing the sound that accompanies them but not in words then the sound speaking words like [illegible]

Now I am awake and like to hear voices. My sister's voice is low and strong and softness quiet. My brother's voice is little and deep and big like mother playing instruments.

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Okay, very good!

February, 1979

Dictation

Danny picked the first with his eyes and stared at her as he could neither see nor hear anything. He turned and ran back down the hillside and straight to the farthest cabin in the clearing. He sat down and stared at her as for some how or other something that might tell him where the bear had gone. But there was only silence.

---

very neat work!

Dictation

Danny picked the first with his eyes, and stared at her as he could neither see nor hear anything. He turned and ran back down the hillside and straight to the farthest cabin in the clearing. He sat down and stared at her as for some how or other something that might tell him where the bear had gone. But there was only silence.

The End

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the original passage. The passage can be either on the chalkboard (covered up during the dictation) or in their textbooks. Students will have a powerful incentive to improve their handwriting and to proofread carefully if they are graded *only* on the number of errors they do *not* find themselves. In this way, only unwillingness to proofread carefully is penalized, and no student is penalized for lack of spelling ability. Needless to say, when students have to read their own writing regularly to find their own errors, the care they take to make the dictation legible increases dramatically, as one may infer from the improved legibility of the second dictation written by a fourth grade student only two days after the first (see sample). A dictation corrected by the student can also be given several days later as a test. Students can also be given the option of studying a passage as homework the night before a dictation lesson or a dictation test.

The grade on a dictation should simply indicate the number of errors made, not which ones; students should always be responsible for finding those they failed to find on their own. If errors are numerous, it is helpful to indicate the number of errors on each line in the margin beside the line. It is also helpful to have a folder for each student containing all dictations, with a chart noting progress in the reduction of error.

Following Up the Dictation

A dictation passage can be used as the basis for a vocabulary or grammar lesson or for even free writing. The following questions might be asked: What are the key words used by the author of the passage? What are some synonyms—or antonyms? What are the important nouns, adjectives, or verbs in the passage? Can students write a story that might have such a passage in it? Or use the information given in the selection in an expanded report of their own? There are many ways to use a good or interesting piece of writing, and each passage will suggest a different focus.

Additional Values of Dictation

In addition to providing contextualized practice for handwriting and spelling, regular dictation practice can enlarge a student's vocabularly. It clearly provides structured but active practice in listening to and writing words in context and, as research by Gipe (1978-1979) and Wolfe (1975) suggests, reading and studying new words in context seems to be the most effective method for developing vocabulary. It may also be a way of helping students incorporate part of their reading vocabulary into their writing vocabulary.

Dictation also gives students regular practice in proofreading, a skill (and a habit) that is rarely fully developed even by high school

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age. Structured proofreading practice may help them to proofread their own free writing more effectively.

As Pappas (1977) notes, dictation is also a simple technique for developing the power of concentrated listening, for increasing the span of attention for phrases and sentences, and for developing facility in recording words exactly. It is obvious that students must pay attention in order to reproduce the dictated passage, and immediate writing actively reinforces what the student has comprehended orally. Moreover, dictation of syntactic phrases in increasingly larger units may be an effective way to develop students' span of attention for reading and writing in longer and longer phrases; as Amble's (1967) research found, training in phrase reading improved elementary school students' reading comprehension. And, finally, training in recording accurately the exact words of a passage may be important for limited English-speaking students who need to become more familiar with the variety of inflectional and derivational endings in English words in order to develop a better understanding of their uses. Frequent practice in writing exactly the vocabulary of informational prose in an interesting context may be far more effective for these students than simply reading it in context—or filling in blanks in multiple-choice exercises. In addition, regular practice in writing complete well-written sentences may help such students to develop a stable sense of English sentence structure and the sense of a complete sentence.

The use of well-chosen literary passages for dictation may have another value. Similar to the benefits of the French dictée, which is traditionally taken from the work of an acknowledged master of French literary language, continuous practice from elementary through secondary school can help students become actively familiar with literary language and the writing style of major authors in English/American literary history.

Concluding Remarks

Dictation exercises should not be seen as a substitute for any of the free writing practice that should constitute the bulk of students' writing experiences. They should, instead, be seen as a way of contextualizing the skill practice that most students seem to need no matter how much free writing practice they have and they certainly can be a substitute for isolated drill in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and usage. While dictation practice may be useful at all grade levels for all kinds of students, it may be particularly beneficial for bilingual, learning disabled, and other special-needs students, who especially need structured and focused practice on specific skills in addition to free writing activities. Although we have as yet no research evidence to document the

benefits of frequent dictation practice, dictation would seem to be worth re-examining and using again regularly in the language arts class in this country.

Sandra Stotsky, an educational consultant specializing in the teaching of writing, teaches a graduate course in Curriculum Development, Instruction, and Assessment in Writing at the Harvard Summer School.

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The Case For Complete Sentence Answers to Questions

Judith Knapp Boyce

In the world of school, questions abound. ("Question" here refers to any query designed to bring a response from the student, regardless of whether it is in the form of a question.) Students confront them in workbooks, on tests, on dittoed sheets, in textbooks, and on blackboards everywhere. In recent years researchers and publishers have lavished attention on "questioning" as an educational tool; I propose consideration of "answering" as an equally important vehicle for integrating knowledge and skills. These abundant questions may trigger various types of answers, most often a word or phrase, frequently just a letter or number. Occasionally, usually only if the teacher has composed question and direction, answers are written in complete sentences. I assert that questions in every classroom, particularly at the middle and junior high school level, should invariably be answered in complete sentences. Furthermore, I assert that there are specific strategies children must be given so that the complete sentences they compose will tap reading and writing skills to reinforce learning across the curriculum. If teachers and publishers accept the need for such a requirement, I believe it will be a step toward integrated learning, toward a spiraling process whereby each question in that constant question barrage will accomplish more than one purpose.

A number of researchers have put forth the notion that reading and writing, even thinking and writing, are reciprocal processes. If this is so, then writing should become a tool for reinforcing and refining what a student has read or thought rather than merely a vehicle for communicating his own ideas to others. In the United States at least, schools do not appear to have incorporated this notion of reciprocity into the day to day curriculum; we need to pursue such incorporation eagerly, to come to grips with the idea that the act of writing in and of itself is of immense value to the development of the mind.

The purpose of questioning in a school setting is to focus the attention of a student on particular ideas or on the conclusions one might draw from a set of facts or ideas. If we examine some typical questions from the sixth grade material below, we can see that pupils are asked either to restate action or facts or to read, synthe-

size, conclude, and then answer. No matter what the task, students' natural inclination is to answer in phrases.

> Build a circuit tester like the one shown. What objects close the circuit? Of what materials are they made? What objects do not close the circuit? Of what materials are they made? (Worksheet #6, SCIS II *Modeling Systems*).
>
> Why did many early people explain the forces of nature as the work of many gods, not the work of one god? (*The Human Adventure - Four World Views*, p. 68).
>
> Why did Karana suddenly jump off the ship which had come to the island to rescue her tribe? (Teacher-made question based on *Island of the Blue Dolphins*).
>
> Paragraph 6 contains many details, but its main idea is not stated. Write a sentence stating the main idea. (*Reading Power* p. 139).
>
> What did Dr. Lorenz discover from his experiment with ducks and geese? (Teacher-made question based on *Reading Power* p.21).

All of these questions, presumably, were preceded by reading, discussion, or activity — perhaps all three. The queries were designed to promote cohesive thinking, and it appears reasonable to assume that a total restatement of that thinking will result in better internationalization of the ideas involved. As Janet Emig states, "The restatement carries with it a responsibility for whatever concept is stated. Perhaps because there is a product involved, writing tends to be a more responsible and committed act than talking" (1977), and, as I will discuss later, students who answer only in words or phrases are, in effect, talking on paper. Requiring a sentence answer, on the other hand, commits the responder to a complete RE-presentation (Berthoff) and fixes the stated concept more firmly in both memory and knowledge. For example, if we look at two sets of answers to the SCIS question above, it is clear that the second answer requires a RE-cognition, or reknowing, (Berthoff) of the concepts in a more complete way than the first.

Set 1: paper clip and needle.
metal, maybe iron
string and button.
cotton and plastic, I think.

Set 2: The paper clip and needle closed the circuit.
The paper clip and needle are made of metal, maybe iron.
The string and the button did not close the circuit.

The string was made of cotton (I think)
and the button was plastic.

Won't a child who has written the Set 2 answers be more likely to retain this concept? Further, won't those who are encouraged to reread and revise their sentences have performed three conscious acts of learning: the original reading or action, the composition of the statement, and the critical appraisal of that statement? Writing, reading and knowing will have all been strengthened.

The concepts which might be reinforced in this way are not, however, only those we ordinarily think of as "facts" — the body of knowledge presented to children in mathematics, social studies and science classes, among others. In both the popular press and the professional journal, we see concern for the poor performance of many children in skill areas such as vocabulary development, spelling, and penmanship. Students who are required to write full sentence answers will write more words, particularly words met recently in context. This reproduction of a new word, setting it in a context, forming the letters and being forced to notice their sequence: all these, too, are acts of learning. Mina Shaughnessy observes in *Errors and Expectations* that "without constant experience with written words, it is impossible . . . to build a memory for the looks and haptical feel of words" (p.172). Especially for the pupil who is not a strong visual learner, just seeing words in print is not enough to fix their structure in his mind; that requires reproducing them on paper. Moreover, across the curriculum, children would gain better control of the vocabularly of each discipline if they not only read but wrote the words. Jeanne Chall sees this control of specialized vocabulary as essential for success in our "paper society" and reading research has identified knowledge of word meaning as a significant factor in reading achievement.

Even a cursory examination of middle school texts and tests leaves no doubt that requiring a full sentence answer for most, if not all, questions has implications beyond each classroom teacher giving this direction to students. Publishers will need to re-examine their materials. Directions and exercises will have to be rewritten at all levels so that sample answers set a good example and so that students are led toward full answers. Middle grade material publishers, especially, need to find out how much room is appropriate — how many lines, how wide the spaces — for typical penmanship at this level. If they are committed to full sentence answers, subject area teachers — science teachers, music teachers and even, on occasion, math teachers (Aren't equations just sentences in another language?) — will have to take up the burden of discussing, modeling, and correcting these sentences while still teaching their curricula. Ideally, they will incorporate an evaluation of form as well

as correctness into their grading systems. The first task, however, devolves upon the elementary teacher and the English teacher, who need to go beyond the injunction "A complete sentence has a subject and a predicate" and teach students to write a "full" answer which is also a technically complete sentence.

To see why teachers need to go beyond the direction "answer in a complete sentence", let us examine the following typical answers to the social studies and reading questions when students were given only that simple direction:

—They thought they were alive.
—She saw her brother on shore.
—They are an important crop there.
—He learned that they became attached to what they saw or heard right after they were born.

A teacher might very well feel compelled to mark such an answer correct and, albeit reluctantly, give full credit. After all, the information is correct, showing comprehension of the material, and the response is a main clause, a sentence. These responses, nonetheless, are somehow unsatisfying and would not seem to lend themselves to expansion into the cogent, coherent essay answer high school and college teachers anticipate when they pose questions. While working with my own students I found specific, concrete, even mechanistic, strategies which helped them compose "fuller" answers. While reading research on the writing process, I found a principle of composition which seems to explain why these strategies work. First, the principle.

E.D. Hirsch, in the introduction to *The Philosophy of Composition*, captures the essence of what we sense is lacking in our typical answers. "The functional pecularity of writing is its need to furnish its own context" (p.7). Janet Emig puts it more simply: "Talk leans on the environment; writing must provide its own context" (p.26). In other words, student answers are often unsatisfying because they only make sense if read in conjunction with the question. They cannot truly stand alone as statements of complete ideas. Beginning writers answer as if they were engaged in a conversation with the teacher or with his stand-in, the page. I have frequently had children, after being exhorted to tell "who learned something from his experiments?", answer earnestly, "Well, you know who, Doctor What's-his-name!" This does not seem to be a response which will yield to maturity; eighth graders fall into the imaginary dialogue as easily as fifth graders. Thus, the task is to awaken in students an awareness of a possible anonymous reader, one who will need more information because he will never have read the question.

This awareness can be fostered in a general way by class discussion. My students enjoy listing some imaginary readers who might see their papers. Would a Chinese girl understand if she found your sentence floating in a bottle on the Yangtze? Would Mr. Spock get the point if only the answer were beamed up? Do parents ever ask for explanations? However, the vague direction to "think about a reader" is not sufficient. Average and below average readers in particular find such hints too abstract (Emig, Chap. 7). In addition to the basic requirements of a complete sentence, two further requirements with which students can easily comply are necessary. Both grow out of the notion of providing context for the reader.

1. The sentence answer may not begin with a pronoun. (Context always provides an antecedent).

2. Enough words from the question must be used so that the reader would understand even if he had not seen the question.

The prohibition against use of an initial pronoun is crucial to the production of context for the reader. Sandra Stotsky, who analyzed high-rated and low-rated essays written for a basic competency exam, found the authors of the low-rated essays relied heavily on personal pronouns as subjects of both main and subordinate clauses. "Their heavy use of first and second person pronouns suggests that they viewed essay writing more as a dialogue with another speaker than as a transaction with a reader" (p. 9). Since many students, especially fourth or fifth graders, may not yet have a have a clear idea what a pronoun is, the teacher will need to list them on the board, and, the list of English pronouns being relatively small, perhaps duplicate a list to which pupils are free to refer while writing. Revising the typical answers so that the subjects are nouns immediately raises their contextual level.

—Early people thought the forces of nature were alive.
—Karana saw her brother on shore.
—Olives are an important crop in Italy.
—Dr. Lorenz learned that the animals became attached to whatever they saw or heard right after they were born.

The requirement to repeat part of the question is not easy for children to master, as the response calls for judgment about which words to use and what syntax will fit smoothly over both the question words and the words supplied by the student. Problems can arise due to the form of the question or the syntax of the answer. Teachers and publishers can phrase questions carefully, but the teacher needs, as in every classroom endeavor, to be flexible. For example, some questions, if repeated in the answer, tend to produce

awkward or ungrammatical sentences unless the writer has an excellent command of syntax, unlikely at the middle and junior high school level. Anne Obenchain cites the following example of such an ungrammatical answer:

—The little boy asked his father could he have a pet monkey. (pp. 3-4)

Children will write this type of answer occasionally even in response to careful questions. The discussions which ensue are excellent opportunities to suggest more appropriate syntax.

Other anomalies will no doubt arise in connection with the requirement to repeat part of the question. A query about an opinion, for instance, automatically prompts a response beginning with a pronoun — "I think that . . . ." Since nothing is more frustrating to children than conflicting directions, accommodation should be made to allow an occasional pronoun. Another problem arises when the "question" is a request to state the main idea. If we want to focus attention on the content of that idea we will prefer the second answer to the first.

—The main idea is that olives are an important crop in Italy.
—Olives are an important crop in Italy.

So there are occasions when the words of the question are not suitable in the answer; again, flexibility and awareness have to be stressed.

The focus and purpose of the requirements and strategies described here are to increase learning of both language and discipline and to improve composition through awareness of the reader for whom context must be created. Once children have mastered the admittedly mechanistic strategies set out here, they will be ready to take the next step: making their sentences more effective and more personal. Eventually teachers will guide children into longer forms of discourse in which, now that knowledge is wide and the context is firmly fixed, argument, narration, persuasion, or exposition will be more forcefully put forward.

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Review Writing: A Practical Application of Bloom's Taxonomy

Elizabeth Carros Keroack

In the 1950's, Benjamin S. Bloom developed a taxonomy of educational objectives that has since become standard content in most teacher preparation programs. But although Bloom's hierarchy of thinking skills moves logically from simple to complex cognition and so is both a practical and effective method of organizing instructional materials, language arts teachers do not often consciously apply the taxonomy to their daily activities. This is indeed unfortunate, as such an application can easily work to spark student interest and improve student performance.

Writing teachers in particular should be enthusiastic disciples of Bloom, because writing is thought transcribed onto paper, it reflects the various levels of cognition through which student writers must pass as they explore a chosen or assigned topic. The prewriting, writing, and rewriting stages of composition are well-incorporated within the Bloom hierarchy of RECALL OF KNOWLEDGE, COMPREHENSION, APPLICATION, ANALYSIS, SYNTHESIS, and EVALUATION and thus may be reinforced by student participation in assignments specially designed to turn thinking into writing.

Bloom's least complex level of cognition is RECALL of KNOWLEDGE—that is, the stating of specific terms, facts, and/or definitions already presented. student writers participate in this kind of thought as they "boomerang" information to its source. When they engage in prewriting (all those things that happen before the first draft is committed to paper), they exercise RECALL in an attempt to find a subject, determine a voice, and establish a viewpoint for their proposed writing. To accomplish these tasks, the students dig into their vast stores of accumulated knowledge and experience.

Once prewriting has been completed, the writing stage begins. Although of short duration, this stage demonstrates the writers' COMPREHENSION of the knowledge to be explored. When students organize ideas and create meaning, they actually change the nature of the information at their disposal before they record it.

As the writing stage progresses, students use their comprehension of recalled knowledge to solve writing problems in the areas of content, form, and audience; this, then, is APPLICATION of knowledge to serve communication goals. Only when such prob-

lems have been overcome do student writers enter Bloom's cognitive level of ANALYSIS of knowledge, the level at which they identify and develop the relationship of a subject to its components.

The act of rewriting is not simply a matter of improving transcription skills. It is, in fact, a time when writers revise initial ideas to suit the purpose of a piece of writing. This SYNTHESIS of knowledge always produces a written communication that was nonexistent previous to their effort. Such a change demands that students tap their creativity, as art is by nature an ever-changing medium.

Finally, in order to perfect their work, student writers begin an EVALUATION of both their process and product. They judge it according to a set criteria, thereby performing (according to Bloom) the most complex cognitive function of which the human brain is capable.

Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives can easily be utilized by teachers of writing to facilitate instruction of content. If assignments are structured so that students pass from one cognitive level to another in order to complete the work, then the frustration often generated by inexperienced writers' lack of perception about a subject will be greatly reduced. Perhaps even more importantly, the hierarchy of thinking skills prevalent in assignments allows teachers to diagnose specific student difficulties in cognitive progression, and thus remediate accordingly with activities developed to facilitate improvement in designated areas. One particular assignment which can catalyze cognitive growth as it expands knowledge of subject matter is Review Writing.

American society's love affair with leisure time has led to a boom in the entertainment industry. Movies, plays, television, concerts, albums, and books are voraciously consumed by a public that begs to be stimulated, diverted, enthralled. But the price of such involvement is no mean thing, as demand often forces prices above and beyond the value of the product or service being provided by the industry and its sacrosanct "artistes".

Students comprise an audience that is too frequently adoring and too seldom critical. As a segment of the population which has the time and money to spend on entertainment, adolescents can benefit immeasurably from instruction in what it means to be a "critical" consumer. An exercise in review writing can fulfill this educational objective as it seeks to improve thinking and writing skills enroute.

For the purposes of the writing teacher, a review may best be defined as "an article or report which evaluates a form of entertainment." It surveys the subject, summarizes its components, contemplates its meaning, and delineates both its positive and negative features. Most students are at least cursorily familiar with this genre, as local television stations often employ "entertainment critics" to

perform a function similar to that of the reviewer. Perusal of clippings from the Book and Arts/Film section of newspapers like *The New York Times* can also help familiarize would-be writers with the nature of the reivew.

Whatever form of entertainment students choose to examine, their first step is to RECALL the subject. They must remember and/or learn enough about it to satisfy reader curiosity. Although they cannot realistically recount all their knowledge, still they must understand the whole in order to discuss its parts and COMPREHEND its "raison d'etre".

At this point in time, student writers begin to adapt their knowledge to the task at hand; they APPLY what they know about the subject to their writing, thus stimulating interest by stressing relevancy while avoiding overkill. By further identifying the components of a subject, they ANALYZE the value of the form of entertainment as an entity in and of itself. Only then are the students truly ready to SYNTHESIZE their findings into a coherent statement of opinion.

Lastly, the fledgling writers EVALUATE the subject by asking themselves, "What is it the consumer wants to know?" They assume the guise of experts, educating the public through the expression of opinion substantiated by fact. As students work to separate fact from opinion, they distinguish between taste and appreciation and so reinforce the notion that each individual is his/her own arbiter of value.

For some students successful participation in the process of composition poses no problem, but for others the ability to move from simple RECALL (prewriting) to EVALUATION (rewriting) may constitute an almost impossible developmental leap. In fact, those students who demonstrate an inability to "complete" the writing process may actually be experiencing difficulties in cognitive thinking, and until these difficulties are diagnosed by an assignment like Review Writing, the teacher can do little to provide remediation in the necessary areas.

In these days of rapidly expanding technical knowledge and highly complex information processing, the development of critical thinkers and writers has become absolutely essential to individual survival and success. If an assignment such as Review Writing can speed the accomplishment of this goal, it should be seriously considered for implementation in every writing classroom.

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But What About (Gulp!) Spelling?

Linda Tilgner

Memories

"TOM SeD BeDE CUM" our older son had written at age five. "TOM SED SUSIN CUM AND SMIL HIR" (Tom said, "Betty, come." Tom said, "Susan, come and smile here.")

He and our younger son had taken great pleasure in stapling scrap paper together into books and creating elaborately illustrated adventures of Batman and Robin, or fancifully embellished accounts of family boating excursions, with extraordinarily original but very decodable phonetic spelling.

I don't know what reception this kind of spelling received in school, but at home my husband and I smiled inwardly at the applied phonics without mentioning the inconsistencies with conventional spelling, chuckled outwardly at the often humorous details of the stories and expressed joy and approval of their sharing with us. Years later, each of our sons was named valedictorian of his high school class and successfully participated in undergraduate studies at Princeton University, so this created spelling certainly didn't *ruin* their academic careers.

Doubts

Still, I have cold feet as I listen to Mary Ellen Giacobbe tell how allowing first graders to use what she calls "invented spelling" works for her in her writing program. Doubts swirl through my mind: "My principal will have conniptions. I can't do this in *my* classroom. How will I explain it to parents?"

It is July, 1980. I am a participant in the Vermont Writing Program at the University of Vermont. The premise of the program is that teachers of writing must themselves be active writers, that writing is a *process*, and that each writer, no matter what his age, must be responsible for and in control of his own writing. Each morning I write. Each afternoon I attend the workshop for teaching writing in grades K-3. Invented spelling is a part of the advocated process.

I have decided to rearrange my first grade schedule to devote the first hour of the day to writing, four days a week. I have prepared materials, devised record keeping strategies. If I commit myself to the program, I realize that I must go with invented spelling, keep careful records and see what happens.

To aid in evaluation and to avoid possible parent misunderstanding, I will keep all the children's writing in school until the end

of the year and use parent-teacher conferences as an opportunity to show growth in writing ability.

Beginnings

Expectant faces gleam before me.

"Who knows how to read?" I ask. It is the first day of first grade. No hands go up. "Who knows how to write?" Several hands wave. I point to the blank books with the jaunty wallpaper covers, let each child choose one plus pens or magic markers with which to "write."

"This is your journal," I explain. "Every day you will write in it. You may want to begin by drawing a picture of something you like or know about and then write about it."

Monique announces, "I'm going to make a rainbow and write about it." I glance around the room. Now, at least six children are curving multicolor bands across the page.

Jeff states, "I'm going to make my camp."

"I'm making black hair," says Kenyon.

Cortney queries Asa, "Blue smoke coming out of the chimney?"

Tori asks me about "is." "What do you hear?" I ask.

"S," she replies.

"O.K., write that," I suggest. She returns to her desk and asks Danny how to spell "is."

It is difficult for me to keep from jumping in. My goal is to help these children become independent writers, to apply their knowledge of letters and sounds to spelling words as best they can, to do their own thinking, to make their own decisions. This is a new role for me, for them.

Kenyon asks, "How do you spell Mom?"

"What beginning sound do you hear?" I ask in return.

"M," he replies.

"What else?"

"L," he says. Later, I think, "Yes, 'L', because he wanted to write 'No Mom allowed.' The 'L' was for 'allowed.'"

Monique, Alex and Rachel produce beautiful rainbows, write, in consultation, "RB." "We know that's not how you spell rainbow," they complain, disturbed that I will not spoonfeed it to them.

"Yes, but you heard two of the sounds," I praise. It does not satisfy them.

As each child shares his page with me and reads his "writing," I encourage him to expound orally to me about the picture. I re-read his writing aloud, and in small letters at the bottom of the page, rewrite it in correct spelling, praising the sounds the child heard correctly.

Monique and crew pounce on the word "rainbow" as I write it. The next day I hand out the pre-primer reader. It is from the Ginn 720

Rainbow edition series. "Mrs. Tilgner, Mrs. Tilgner!" exclaim the rainbow girls. "This book has the word 'rainbow' in it." If nothing else, they have learned to read "rainbow!"

It becomes easier. The children are, after several days, secure that they will not be scolded for incorrect spelling. Conversely, they will be praised for the sounds they hear and apply to their spelling. I am amazed at how intensely they concentrate as they try to sound out words. It becomes apparent very quickly how extensive or limited are each child's phonics skills. Gail and Danny try complete sentences. Jeff writes "M" for mom. The letters Lynn writes have no connection with what she says ("reads") about her picture.

After using invented spelling as part of my approach to writing for two school years, I can make some generalizations about its value.

Independence

Invented spelling helps children to become independent writers. They no longer fidget with hands in air, waiting for the teacher to help them spell unknown words. They write, at their own pace. They can keep a train of thought intact.

Individualized Phonics

Practice in applying phonics skills is constant. When a child reads his writing to me, I am aware of which skills have been learned, which are as yet unlearned and which need reinforcement. I find that all children accumulate skills in the same general order, at differing rates.

First to be used consistently are initial consonant sounds. Ending and middle consonant sounds come next. Long vowel sounds (written without the supporting silent *e* or second vowel) and short vowel sounds in short words follow, although the latter are, at first, often used incorrectly and inconsistently. Digraphs, blends and suffixes are added by most children as the year continues.

When a child reads his writing to me, we focus first on content. Then I praise the *correct* phonics and spelling and choose one specific skill on which to work — a digraph, a blend, adding "ing" to a root word, or whatever the level of the child's writing indicates is a need. If a child has repeatedly used the same convention for a word—for instance, "MI" for my—I may teach him the correct spelling for that word.

Excerpts from Laurel's writing provide an example of a typical progression.

> Sept. 3, 1981, page 1 of her journal:
> "T IS M F SI P" (This is my friend's swimming pool.)
> Laurel uses initial consonants plus short *i*. She knows the spelling for "is."

Sept. 8, 1981, page 2
"MI DAD is PLi SR" (My Dad is playing soccer.)
She hears the final *i* sound in "my," the final *r* in "soccer."
She knows the spelling for "Dad."

Sept. 17, 1981, page 10
"This is MY Brother He PT."
(This is my brother. He pitched.) We have talked about conventional spelling for "my." Laurel has learned to spell "this" and has copied "brother" from my recording of her reading on a previous page. She knows that a period goes at the "end."

October 6, 1981, page 40 (last page of the journal)
"This is when I Am Plaing with My sistr." (This is when I am playing with my sister.)
She is using the digraph "th" in initial and final positions. We have talked about the suffix "ing."

After a child finishes his journal, he begins writing "books"—usually four to eight pages of illustrations plus writing on a common theme.

October 22, 1981 Laurel's fourth book
Mike fal off a swing sat.
p.1: Mike fal off a swing sat. He fell on his bac.
p.2: My mom wost hom. My mom wet 4 a woc.
p.3: He had a bad bros. on his bac.
p.4: I wos wred.
p.5: My sistr colld my Dad.
p.6: My mom came home. fim wocking.
p.7: He had to go to bed wel dinr WS made.
(Mike fell off a swing set. He fell on his back. My mom wasn't home. My mom went for a walk. He had a bad bruise on his back. I was worried. My sister called my Dad. My mom came home from walking. He had to go to bed while dinner was made.)

Laurel is using beginning, middle and ending sounds and some blends *(br, sw)*. She uses "ing" consistently. While the book was in progress, I introduced her to the silent *e* rule. She is overusing periods.

Sometimes the phonics lessons have unintended results. Laurel and I had talked about the silent *e* rule in words such as "came," "made" and "home." When she reads her fifth book to me, she glows as she reads the word "played," written "plade," for she had remembered that rule about silent *e*!

May 10, 1982 An excerpt from Laurel's thirty-first book
I fell off my bike
. . . So I want to get my shoorts on. I kissed mom and got on my bike. Then I fell. I got hit in the chest

with the handl bar. When it hit me in the chest I cood hardlee crie becaus I cood not brethe. My sister got my bike well (while) my mom pot me on the soofa. But I cood walk.

By this time of the year, she spells CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) and CVCe words correctly most of the time, uses suffixes *s* and *ed*, and digraphs *ch*, *th*, *sh*, and *wh*. She includes periods and has learned to capitalize the first word of a sentence. She has conventionalized the spelling "cood." At this point I might teach her the correct spelling for *could*. She still has minor errors in short vowel usage, spelling "went" with an *a* and substituting *o* for *u* in "put."

Differences

Invented spelling allows for individual differences. Each child is able to write at his own level and to progress at his own pace.

Todd begins the year knowing the names of only about half the alphabet letters and having almost no concept of beginning sounds. On Sept. 8, 1981, he makes this entry in his journal:

THZEA
ZCEB
DACEeU
RFAEeGP

and reads to me, "This is my Uncle Ray's pool." It is October 27 before he writes:

I S A SK. (I saw a skunk.)

For Todd, this is a breakthrough—the first indication of the application of sound-symbol correspondence.

A child's need for a skills lesson is often obvious.

My Fivr cud a Trke and Ven Vu Trke
asrd him.

writes David on November 2. He reads to me, "My father called a turkey and then the turkey answered him." We have a lesson on *th*, as in then, the and father. On December 2, he writes about "Wen I got my hicines." (When I Got My Chickens). We talk about *ch*.

Unlimited Vocabulary

Adventure, mechanical, vegetables, paleontologist, dandelions—first grade spelling words? Certainly not, yet my first graders use such words as these in their writing without hesitation.

"I was napping when I said to myself, I want to go on an adventure," reads David on June 3. He has written:

I was naping wan I said to myself I want to go on a eckvenchr.
so I got on my swomp boots. then I went in my woods. I wackt
throo swomps. rushes and a streem.

He writes of the discovery of raccoon tracks one day, and the excitement of actually seeing the racoon the next:

> It was eating a brown trowt. his claws ware hookt into it. he was bending ovor. his feet ware flat on the grownd. he was percht on a rock. I thingk that is war he wotchis for fish.

The freedom to sound out unknown words has given David power in his writing. He can focus on how to best express his thoughts.

Here are some examples of longer or more difficult words that my pupils have used, followed by the invented spelling. One can see that most of these words, although incorrectly spelled, are phonetically constructed.

paleontologist — paleaantolojist
million — milyin
mechanical — mukanicl
museum — myoosem
excited — esitid, icsidid
evaporates — evapratse
dandelions — dandolyins
lasagna — Luzonya
macaroni — macroney
hospital — hospitle
accident — axadint, acsadent
vacation — vaecashn
usually — youshle
vegetables — vegdbls
toboggan — tbogin

Spelling Progress

Most children are motivated to strive for correct spelling and become resourceful in finding it without asking me. A child may look in a published book (Published books—Each time a child completes four to six books, he picks the one he likes best and we work to further improve it. Then I type it in correct spelling, bind it in a wallpaper cover and the child illustrates it. Published books become part of our classroom library.), refer to my recording of his writing conference in a previous book, ask a friend or look in a simple picture dictionary.

A positive approach is the key. I try always to praise correctly spelled words and the parts of incorrectly spelled words in which the child successfully applies known phonics skills. Early in the year I write the entire sentence or sentences in small letters in correct spelling at the bottom of each page after the child reads his writing aloud. As the child's skills improve, I write the correct spelling for misspelled words only, in tiny letters above or below the word, always stressing how close the child has come. I never cross out or circle a word. I try to encourage progress, not spotlight errors.

By the end of the school year, most students are at or above expectations for first grade, spelling regular CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant), CVCe, CVVC, VC, CV words with consistency, adding digraphs and blends in initial or final position to these basic patterns, and spelling correctly a group of often-used sight words. The better spellers are successful with many more difficult words. Here are some examples of the latter, taken from writing done during April, May and June of first grade:

Compound words	Irregular words
driveway	once
dugout	earth
airplane	could
birthday	taught
bathroom	write
girlfriend	high
motorcycle	
fireball	Interest words
	marbles
Root word and suffixes	bible
looked	movie
scary	people
played	lemonade
places	monster
presents	imagine
printing	castle
wanted	Atlantic Ocean
rushes	dinosaurs
	cartoons

Summary

If a child is responsible for spelling words as best he can, if successfully heard sounds and successfully spelled words are praised, and if the conventional spelling is written somewhere on the page, invented spelling as an approach to writing can have the following outcomes:

Children become independent writers, able to keep a train of thought intact.

Children repeatedly apply learned phonics skills, and in doing so, indicate which skills have been acquired, which need reinforcement and which are as yet unlearned.

Children can progress at their own pace.

Children are able to use an unlimited vocabulary in their writing.

Children are motivated to strive for correct spelling, and by the end of the year are at or above expectations for first grade.

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All About Me Metaphors

Maria T. Valeri & Sharyn N. Disabato

What gives vividness to writing? What lights up trite expressions? What helps poets paint poetry? What contributes life to banal language? Figuratively speaking, metaphor! Metaphorical language or figurative language is the frosting on the cake. It breathes life into overworked expressions. Metaphors are comparisons made between human beings, animals, animate or inanimate objects.

How can teachers assist students in capturing the magic of the metaphor? They can structure learning experiences in which students talk and write about themselves metaphorically. Several approaches can be undertaken. First, read daily a variety of children's literature books which contain metaphorical passages. Second, provide writing exercises employing metaphor. Students who have been exposed to metaphors orally can learn to produce metaphors in their writing. Third, motivate students to write metaphorically through teacher modeling. Teacher interest and a positive attitude towards writing can enhance the student's confidence in learning to write with metaphors.

The authors offer four specific teaching steps that a teacher may use to teach metaphorical language. After defining and discussing the term *metaphor*, four procedures, read, recite, recall, and reinforce may be used. They are: 1) Read: Read to students daily high quality literature on feelings, self-concept, movement, animals, colors, seasons, holidays, cartoons (newspapers), and bodily awareness, thus exposing students to metaphors; 2) Recite: Ask the students to listen and try to recognize metaphorical expressions and have them substitute their own metaphors for those of the author; 3) Recall: Ask the students to explain the comparison expressed figuratively; and 4) Reinforce: Provide writing experiences that will permit students to utilize metaphors.

The four metaphorical Rs (read, recite, recall, and reinforce) can guide teachers with a specific process for teaching the recognition of metaphors and provide positive writing experiences utilizing metaphorical language.

How can teachers promote positive writing experiences utilizing metaphors? The authors have developed eleven types of metaphors which can aid students in understanding the concept of metaphor and thereby assisting in the utilization of metaphorical language in their writing about themselves. Each metaphor type is defined and specific examples are provided for clarification. Similes are a type

of metaphor and can be fitted into one of the metaphor types. Each metaphor type can be used in conjunction with a specific teaching unit on self-concept or a daily lesson on developing human awareness.

All About Me Metaphors

Name and Metaphor	Children compare their names to a human being, an animal or an animate or inanimate object. My name, Cecile, sounds like the hissing of a snake. My name, Pepe, sounds like popping corn.
Body and Metaphor	Children make a comparison, between their body parts and a human being, an animal, or an animate or inanimate object. His eyes are like sparkling diamonds. Her legs were like the trunks of a tree.
Feeling and Metaphor	Children talk about their feelings. They make a comparison between themselves and a human being, an animal, or an animate or inanimate object. I feel like a wilting flower. Today I am like a boa constrictor ready to strike.
Color and Metaphor	Children select their favorite color. They write a comparison between their favorite color and a human being, an animal, or an animate or inanimate object. Red is like passion. White is like the first falling snow.
Cartoon and Metaphor	Children select a favorite cartoon character and make a comparison between the cartoon character and a human being, an animal, or an animate or inanimate object. Garfield, the cat, hissed like a viper ready to strike like a poisonous dart. Charlie Brown felt like a proud peacock when he won the contest.
Animal and Metaphor	Children select their favorite animal and write a comparison between it and a human being, or an animate or inanimate object.

The giraffe stood like a proud king about to to be crowned.
The beetle was as still as a silent rock.

Season/Holiday and Metaphor

Children compare a season of the year or a holiday to a human being, an animal, or an animate or inanimate object.
The winter snow is like a piece of a fluffy cloud.
The summer evening sky was as gauzy as a silk scarf.
Christmas is like an early Fourth of July celebration with a sky lit up with brightly colored presents.
New Year's Day is like a new beginning for each person to follow their unfulfilled dream.

Sports and Metaphor

Children compare a sports game to a human being, an animal, or an animate or inanimate object.
A hockey game is a graceful free-for-all.
A field hockey game is like a pin ball machine.

Dance/Movement Metaphor

Children view a video of specialized dance or movement. They will make a comparison of the dance or movement to a human being, an animal, or an animate or inanimate object.
The dancers ran like frightened deer.
The ballerina tiptoed across the stage like a flamingo.
I'm shaking like Rice Krispies in a box.
I'm twirling like popcorn in a hot-air popcorn machine.

Sound and Metaphor

Children brainstorm as many sounds as they can think of. They make comparisons between the particular sound and a human being, an animal, or an animate, or inanimate object.
The sound of the teacher's voice was like a trembly truck horn.
My sister's voice sounded like a frog croaking.

Open-ended phrases and Metaphor

Children are given a list of metaphorical phrases. They are asked to complete each phrase using a metaphorical phrase that compares it to a human being, an animal, or an animate or an inanimate object.
as small as . . . (the tiniest sound).
as slippery as . . . (a soapy hand).

Art and Metaphor

Children react to abstract and representational art and architecture. Comparisons are made between the art work and a human being, an animal, or an animate or inanimate object.
Turner's paintings are like trains going through a dream.
The Washington Monument reminds me of a sharpened pencil.
Picasso's sculpture located in down town Chicago looks like a cow sticking out its tongue.

Students' exposure to a variety of literature books on the topic of self-concept which contain metaphors can enhance their knowledge of metaphor thus enabling the stuents to orally produce metaphors. This oral production of metaphors can aid in the written production of metaphorical expressions. The integration of self-concept, dance, movement, art, and the other metaphorical types in conjunction with metaphor can allow students to increase their four basic communication skills; namely, speaking, reading, listening, and writing.

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Using the Newspaper to Strengthen the Reader-Writer Relationship of Middle School Students

Margery Staman Miller

The fact that reading and writing are ranked as the two most important communication processes dealt with in the schools would be disputed by few educators or persons who make up the public in general. However, too often these two language related skills are kept separate from one another in the curriculum, and too often each of these is separated from the other language arts — listening and speaking.

The literacy crisis highlighted by the passage of the 1978 ESEA Basic Skills Improvement Act has caused educators to take a hard look at the reading and writing habits of both the in-school and out-of-school populations in the United States (Guthrie, 1981). In the writing area the problems detected go beyond poor use of mechanics — punctuation, capitalization, grammar — and in the reading area they go beyond inadequate reading skills at the literal level. Moreover, competency in reading and writing clearly rests on one's ability to use language both receptively and expressively. In models such as the ones developed by Rubin (1975) and Moffett (in Moffett and Wagner, 1976) active communication not only rests on the individual's use of language, but also on his comprehension of ideas and structures and on his willingness to actively reflect upon, argue about, and raise questions concerning real and vicarious experiences.

It is in our classroom settings — whether it be the regular classroom, the resource room or the content area class — that we can teach the comprehension skills and the writing skills which naturally evolve from newspaper reading. Paraphrasing Francis Bacon's words we can use the newspaper to help students become "full, ready, and exact" persons (Cheyney, 1978, p. 45). With regard to the development of an integrated reading and writing curriculum for the middle grades, "full" implies individuals filled with ideas and information about their real and vicarious worlds. "Ready" is another term for the active role of speaker or writer which we are equipping the students to play. And finally, "exact" is a synonym for the correct and appropriate use of structures needed in both the comprehending and the composing acts.

Although reading comprehension varies with the needs of the reader, and the readability and intent of a piece, Degler (1978) has pointed out that comprehension of the newspaper depends upon the reader's ability to do three things. He must detect and remember basic information (the W,W,W,W,W &H of a news piece, the scores and wins and losses of a sports team, the qualifications for a job in the Help Wanted section); he must be able to take explicitly stated information and make simple predictions or draw inferences; and, finally, he must be able to judge the validity or the point of view expressed in an article. Critical reading when applied to newspaper readership is the ability to remember, to infer, and to evaluate various articles or selections found in the news media, and subsequently to find an appropriate personal or public way to respond to these.

Middle school students should be encouraged to explore problems of fairness, credibility, censorship, and a reporter's privilege with regard to the newspaper and the articles and viewpoints it presents as a way to develop the ability to draw and support conclusions. To extend this, students in a role playing situation could form special interest groups such as union members, elder citizens, women's groups, and other specific minority groups. Each group would censor the newspaper for a day by identifying articles, ads, photos, and cartoons or comics which would disagree with their viewpoint or which would be offensive to them as a group. This activity not only would encourage discussion of the benefits (and perhaps liabilities) of the First Amendment, but it also would engage the students actively in drawing conclusions as well as interpreting and evaluating the media (Lindsey, 1975; Kline and Davidson, 1977).

The ability to compare and contrast is yet another of the important thinking skills which can be taught and practiced when using the newspaper. Students should be encouraged to read widely in order to see how two newspaper accounts on the same event may differ by looking at their location in the paper, the use of photos and headlines for emphasis, and for the source control, i.e., local reporting, AP or UPI. Such differences can be seen and analyzed by looking at a community weekly paper and a daily, by looking at newspapers from different cities or by comparing a newspaper and T.V. report on the same story. An extension of this activity would be for students to select a news story that originated in their community and to write their own story showing why a particular event might be of importance to people outside of their community. They could go a step further in the critical thinking/reading act and suggest in writing why the event may be important enough to be considered by historians for future history books (Degler, 1978; Raimo, 1982).

In addition to the previously mentioned reading skills required to effectively use the newspaper the teacher should demonstrate how the newspaper uses different patterns of writing (informative, instructional, and persuasive) and different modes of written discourse (interviews, editorials, ads and letters) to involve and meet the complex needs of its readers (Butters, J. et. al., 1974).

The informative writing pattern used most extensively in the newspaper rests on a subject about which the major details (W,W,W,W,W &H) are presented. The details contained in the lead are usually defined, described or refined in the paragraphs which follow. The reading and the writing of such informational articles depends upon the critical thinking skills involved in sequencing, comparing and contrasting, and identifying the mood or tone of a selection. Students given the key facts from a news story could be asked to create their own leads and extensions of a story which would establish a point of view and create interest for the reader. Students using the informative writing pattern and gaining an understanding of point-of-view could also be asked to rewrite a news article from the angle of one of the persons involved. This might be an account of a runaway told by the youngster, the parent, a counselor or a law enforcement official.

The instructional format which includes the identification of a subject, the listing of tools and materials, an outline of the necessary steps, and the benefits to the reader for following the specific procedures is the second basic writing pattern found in the newspaper. Recipes and arts and crafts sections included in the newspaper as well as those in magazines and T.V. guides are examples of this writing pattern which are particularly appealing to middle school students. Many students have hobbies and are experts in non-academic areas. Using the instructional format for writing activities would help students organize their ideas and information in a meaningful way and to encourage them to share their knowledge and interests with others.

The third major pattern which students can be taught to identify and to use is that of persuasive writing. Its basic components are identification of a problem, analysis of the effects and causes, the development of a solution, and usually the suggestion of some action by the reader. The teacher can also ask the students to identify something they feel strongly about (a community concern, a school concern, a teen-age concern), and then they can be guided in writing a brief article using the persuasive structure. By identifying their own strong feelings and trying to convince someone else of their view, they will become more sensitive to the power of the persuasive structure and how an advertiser, a sports writer, or an editor uses this same skill in their professional role to get us as the

reader to do, to buy, or to think in a certain way. Another use of the persuasive format is the writing needed to respond to job advertisements. In such writing activities the student must develop a clear statement of interest and must provide enough details about their job qualifications to effectively persuade an employer to consider them for the given position. Students in the middle grades could actually respond to ads for pet sitters or handy persons which are often in local papers. As part of a career awareness program they could write letters of application for positions in different fields, and in role playing situations they could interview one another for those jobs.

Activities which focus on the interrelatedness of the language arts in a multidisciplinary setting are particularly relevant for the enhancement of the decoding (reading) and encoding (writing) skills needed in the middle grades. The newspaper as a varied and current record of what is important and meaningful to individuals in our society is an invaluable source in meeting the needs of any heterogeneous school population. Furthermore, as seen in this article, not only can the newspaper stimulate the development of basic competencies in a realistic manner, but it can also contribute to the development of problem solving capabilities, career awareness and leadership skills which are needed by both the individual and by our society at large.

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"It Has To Be a Poem, This Idea I Have . . ."

Rae N. Iverson

Andrea was different. When she came into my class along with twenty-two other bright sophomores, I didn't notice her especially. She was quiet, studious, did not draw attention to herself with the usual giggling and desk-hopping of her peers. I began the marking period, as I am wont to do each quarter, with writing. The first papers were . . . first papers: some good, most adequate, a few mediocre. And one outstanding. That's when I noticed Andrea. That's when she separated herself in my mind from the rest of the beribboned and Niked teenagers. She took to drafting and conferencing like piranha to meat; she was hungry for more.

In the midst of working on her narrative, Andrea frequently slumped down in her plastic desk-chair intent on the pages of a small black and white blotched volume called simply COMPOSITIONS. I wanted to ask her what was so fascinating in that book that it drew her away from the noise of the room. But I didn't. I sensed a privacy about her, and trusted that she would show me the contents when she was ready.

I didn't have to wait long. Before the end of the marking period, and in the throes of yet another writing task, she asked for a conference to talk about "something else I've been working on."

"I know I want to write a poem. I mean, it has to *be* a poem, this idea I have . . . ." Andrea's voice trailed off, and she raised her hands slightly, questioning her own statement.

"What is the idea? Would you tell me about it?"

"I don't know, it's really hard . . . here with the kids." She stole a furtive glance out to her classmates, not wanting to share with them yet.

"I'd like to hear what you're thinking."

"Do you even like poetry? I mean, you write, and all . . . ."

"I love poetry and you know how I feel about writing." I gave her my "Don't-stall-get-on-with-this-poem-that-has-to-be" look.

"Right. OK, here goes." She thumbed through her black and white book, oblivious to the bits of colored paper which fell from the pages to her feet, and scanned the printing on a folded unlined draft. "Do you want to see the latest rendition, or the first things . . . ." Her voice trailed off again, which I came to expect as a working part of Andrea, and the volume dropped. I didn't know if she was

inviting me to a quiet conspiracy with her poem or talking to herself. Finally she muttered, "Guess you better start at the beginning."

She shifted in her seat, toyed with the ceramic pansy pinned to her blouse collar. "I'd let you read it, but I don't think you could decipher this mess." I was just as happy, since I wanted to hear her read, and have *her* hear herself say the words.

written 5/16/83

(1) Is there ~~no~~ not loneliness to the child that swings
in an empty schoolyard/~~playground?~~
With the first robin on an early spring morn
Chirping a song of yesterday to a time gone by?

(2) Is there not a man, calling his sweetheart
When the loneliness of a thousand dreamless
nights wakens unto him, into a
spaceless darkness, where no one
~~soul will hear him~~ hide?

(3) Is there not loneliness to the actor
who stands on a stage, looking upon
the vast ~~empty~~ space of an empty theater?

(4) Was there not loneliness when death,
armed with a double-edged sword,
plunged into the heart of the babe (tense change)

~~But happiness persevered~~ ?
~~and love continued~~

"What is this all about, Andrea?" I wanted to hear her summarize her focus, then we would both know where she was.

"It seems to be a progression — did you see that? — of loneliness in childhood, through adolescence, to the career world, to, so far, death . . . That's too big a jump, maybe old age or retirement or something." She was so sure of the form, and yet the ideas were not clear. She needed to put the mental image into language, to hear herself speak what was so clear in her mind.

"May I look at it?"

"Sure. Sorry it's such a mess."

"You've really been working on this. Looking for exact words."

"Yeah. Like 'schoolyard' and 'playground'. And in that same line with 'no' and 'not'. One sort of implies a yes answer, the other is definitely negative."

"What do you see in your mind? What is the picture that sparked this idea?" She smiled and laughed a short little gurgle.

"Remember that paper I wrote about the retarded girl?" I nodded, remembering well her first paper: a study of a mentally retarded girl who rode the school bus every day, riding the back road bumps and slides to the jeers and pokes of "normal" kids. Andrea's observations were sensitive and insightful. She had captured the girl's

point of view poignantly. "Well, I seem to get my ideas on the bus. When we were going past the elementary school in Richmond, there was a girl on the swings, her pigtails swaying up and down, a bird, and no one around. She was so alone. It just struck me." She swept her hand across the first lines of her poem. "I mean, that *is* loneliness. There's no question about it, in my mind, anyway."

"But you made the poem a kind of question. Is that what you want?"

"How else could I do it? You can't just say it, can you?"

"What would that be like?"

"I don't know yet." With her head in her hands, Andrea hunched over her draft.

"What do you need to do to get started again, to keep going?" I wanted to leave her with a plan, with a place in the draft or an idea to work on.

"Yeah, well, that's a good question. Maybe I need to write a stanza on loneliness in old age or retirement, maybe continue to death . . . I have more questions than answers."

"Do you ever write your questions down, just the way you'd ask them?" She turned slightly, ran her tongue over her bottom lip, shrugged her shoulder. I hadn't made myself clear. "Well, for instance, back at 'schoolyard' and 'playground', what questions did you ask yourself to make that choice?"

"Hmm. I get it. Just what I'm thinking."

"Yes. Write down the questions you have — about anything — so you don't forget them for conferencing tomorrow.

The bell rang signalling the end of class. Reluctantly Andrea rose and moved away from the table. While the other twenty-two sophomores all tried to be first out the door, she put her books in order, made a few quick notes on the loose poem page, then shuffled toward the door.

"Bye. See ya tomorrow. And thanks." Her usual parting words were nearly lost in the high-pitched squeals of the freshmen rushing in ahead of the tardy bell.

Several days passed before I was able to get back to her. I needed to conference with the other writers, and Andrea made no overtures to seek me out. During those days, she talked with other students and wrote in her blotched book. When she came in, COMPOSITIONS topped her huge tower of books.

"Guess what?" She broke the silence of the empty classroom with the first words I had heard from her in days.

"Well, it's got to be the poem. How's it coming?"

"I think you're going to be surprised." A huge smile took over her usually controlled, gentle face. "Have you got time now?" I glanced at the clock. 8:25. Twenty minutes before the rest of the students would pile in for first period.

"Sure. You've really got my curiosity up, now." She handed me her well-worn book, opened to the first revision of her poem:

R-1

PAX SOLA

A child
swings in an empty schoolyard with
a robin on an early spring morn
chirping a song of yesterday
to a time gone by.

An actor
stands on a stage looking
upon the vast space
of an empty theater
(rehearsing his lines?).

A tree
near a running babble
(of water)
(that) polishes stones,
reaches heavenward
while roots cling to the earth.

"I don't know what to say. What made this happen?"

"I was trying to find a pattern. But keep going. Turn the page — there's something more." An impish smile curled at the corners of her mouth, her fingers brushed the binding of her physics book.

The next page showed still another revision and then, to my complete surprise, two pages of self-critiquing! She had been slumped in her chair all that time talking to herself, conferencing with herself about the poem that haunted and pestered to be written. And she had taken the next big step — writing the thinking process she was going through in her critiques. She had discovered that writing leads to thinking, which in turn leads to more writing.

3-21 Critique #2 (C-2)

. . . Problems! I seem to have decided on a basic 5-line-per-verse form. Now I have three ideas (child, actor, tree) with no way to connect them! I have switched my main idea from a question of "What is loneliness?" to being alone. An unbelievable thing is happening. I find myself writing (positively) and hopefully generating a feeling of peacefulness in the reader, hence the name PAX SOLA or, Peace Alone! Now that I know my main idea, I believe I need 2 or 3 more verses and then a way to finish this off. I don't want it so long that the reader will become bored and disinterested.

3-23 C-3

Ideas & items needed to make poem clearer, more concise:

*free write about how all 3 verses are connected. From here develop into a verse or two.

*change 1st verse, the bird chirping doesn't fit in with being alone and the last 2 lines seem like a cliche, or too gaudy.

*3rd verse - contrast in 2nd and 3rd lines is good and part of "polishes stones". Assimilate these two. Maybe use R-1's 3rd verse but change line 2.

Get a move on, this must be handed in by Monday.

"Andrea, this is amazing. How did you come up with this idea?"

"Well, you said something about writing down the questions I had for the next conference. But instead of questions exactly, I started writing what I was thinking about the silly thing — as though I were talking to you. And then I started getting all these ideas about how to change it."

And what "talking" she had accomplished. I could see that she had focused her thinking on locating the main idea, the thrust for the image she had. And without any specific guidance from me, she had concerned herself with the needs of the reader. All that had led to a title, which gave her tighter direction. Now she was really committed, and had a need to go on, to make changes and substitutions for the purpose of clarity. I wanted desperately to read on, to see what she had created for herself, to see how insightful she had become and what that meant for her poem. I struggled not to violate her domain by leafing through her book, but she obviously took pity on me.

"Look at the third revision. I started filing through my memory for smaller details of that scene. Only the first verse seems to work —"

In an empty schoolyard
a child swings
holding two braided, frayed ropes
while a chickadee sings/calls
in a bare birch tree."

. . . then her own critiquing on the following page:

C-4

I think I finally have the first verse clear and concise; the whole thing just yells out being alone! — but it is peaceful. I will switch the 1st and 2nd lines in the 2nd verse to conform to verse 1's form.

I just reread the 1st verse — there's something I still don't like about the 4th line. Hmm . . . better think about it, work on it.

"Yes, I see what you have done. The frayed braided ropes give a particular picture. And the single chickadee — not a robin or scarlet tanager. We know it's autumn. And there's only one tree — that's alone, too." She smiled. Then a long sigh replaced her pleasure.

"Mmmm. I know you'd see it, too. But the rest is so-o-o-o bad."

"Hey. One thing at a time. You did it once — and all by yourself, I might add. You'll do it again."

"Yeah, maybe. Could I hand this in for credit?"

"Sure, Andrea. I have another idea. How would you feel about sending it to a contest?" She burst out in laughter at this, but I saw in her honey brown eyes something not even close to laughing.

"Is it good enough? Could it win?"

"No guarantees. But it sure gives you a deadline. And someone else's opinion, if you want that."

"I don't know. If no one else understands it, I . . . . It's so clear to me, but I just don't know . . . ."

"You don't have to, it was just a thought. But let's set a deadline anyway; give you something to work toward."

"Monday. I'll have something Monday. I don't want to drag it out."

"OK, Monday it is." I looked back at her other notes and fell on the last line of her critique for 3-23. She had already committed herself to Monday without the contest or my suggestions.

"So, what's next here?"

"Well, I'm going to move on to the other verses, just to see what happens. I need to discover ways of carrying 'alone' through different stages of life."

Our dialogue ends here, while the real work of talking to herself about her writing begins. What follows, now, are continued excerpts from her journal that show how she achieved that internalizing of the questioning. She became objective and intuitive about her own work, making comments and revisions that she felt brought her illusive topic into sharper focus. We continued to conference her progress, but more spontaneously: at lunch, at her locker, between classes. We talked about the importance of individual words, the poetic line, ambiguities and images, the value of rewriting.

3-29 R-4 last 2 verses

Standing on a stage
an actor
looking upon the vast space
of an empty theater
rehearsing his lines

Good god! Andrea!
Be serious!

In the middle of nowhere
a tree,
forever reaches heavenward
into the azure blue sky;
streaks of dirt
on an endless cloud of nothingness.

Reaching heavenward
a tree,
stretching thin brown fingers
into the azure blueness
of a sky of nothingness

C-5
I think I can safely say that the 2nd verse is complete. I don't know what happens to me when I arrive at the 3rd verse . . . anyways, I believe I've got my general idea for the 3rd verse, but the 'alone' feeling is still missing . . .

Concentrate!
Visualize!
Be alone!

What I found especially intriguing about the fourth revision was Andrea's insistence that the structure of the stanzas be parallel. The first one, which remains essentially unchanged throughout the revisions, has set the pattern for all the others. This led her to experiment with the placement of lines for the troublesome third stanza; and, more importantly, to become more selective with the details she would include in the trial drafts.

In the next revision, she concentrated (as she said she must in C-5!) on working within the set structure for stanza three. Her willingness to abandon previous lines and phrases was a good sign that she needed to rehear as well as rewrite the ideas.

R-5
While roots cling to the earth
~~a tree,~~
stretching thin fingers heavenward
reaches into the blue-blackness
pulling starts from the sky.

C-6
. . . you're getting more focused but still not right. 1st line is too long, still want contrast though . . .

does the last line fit? . . . . will the reader visualize being alone? Put 2nd line 1st, . . . you've always had better luck this way . . .

A tree
clinging to the earth
stretches thin fingers heavenward
pulling stars
from the sky.

this newest revision is crisp, to the point. It would be fine — if it had something to do with the poem!! My mind keeps coming back to stars, visualizing, lying on my back (alone) in a meadow, at night (duh!) looking at the stars . . . twinkling with secrets I'll never know.

I sensed in this revision that Andrea was fighting with the images which prompted the poem in the first place. Her initial spark came from her schoolbus window. Now she seems to see a connection, however legitimate, with a recurring vision in which she is contemplating the heavens. She is becoming personally involved with the topic; it is growing from objective observations to a deeper personal statement about aloneness. I was not at all surprised to see this personal questioning take a fictionalized form: in a sense she was the tree.

The next revision (R-6) showed her acknowledgement of her own wondering — she abandoned the distance of "child" and "actor" and wrote about "I". Going back to the C-5 critique, she was allowing herself to visualize and be alone, to "free write" in the poem's structure. Also, and not so incidentally, a delightful sense of humor was emerging. She could deal with a serious topic without taking herself too seriously (R-4); she recognized triteness for what it is, sensed when she was not communicating her ideas successfully to an audience.

R-6
Lying in the golden expanse
of a meadow
I hear the naked screech
of a banshee
as the wind howls -

After this stanza was written, Andrea came into my room and plopped the book down on my desk. By this time, I had learned to let her start our conferences. Frequently, I did no talking at all. She made a gruesome face and said, "It rots."

"Andrea, what is a banshee?" We both laughed — neither one of us knew!

"I told you, it rots. I was feeling silly, it just came out."

"Go back to your other stanzas. What seems to be linking them together?"

"I don't know. Maybe I should just drop the whole thing." I didn't respond to that — I knew she wouldn't. Hadn't she said weeks ago 'It has to be a poem, this idea I have . . . '? "I'll see you later. Guess I'm not in the mood."

The following critique was written some time after our "unsuccessful" conference. I had no inkling from that conversation that she had a grasp on the connections between the verses.

> C-7
> I'm so excited! I finally figured out how everything in my poem is connected. The first word of both verses is a person using one of his/her senses to be in contact with something. I have a contrast and comparison all rolled into one! Senses are used for communication . . . The special whatever here is that I have communicated by writing about people who are alone . . . Since I've already used touching (verse 1) and looking (verse 2), I'm left with taste, hearing or smell . . . I was meant to write about a person communicating . . . Should be easy now.

I was especially fascinated by the end of that journal entry:

> I need to cultivate my three senses into a final verse switching from . . . exterior influences to forces from inside - communication with yourself. This would truly be achieving Pax Sola, Peace Alone!

As a result of her revelation about the movement of the poem, Andrea began again to fiddle around with specific wording, especially in the first stanza. This wasn't too surprising — there had been an actual observation, and she had such a specific image in her mind that the details were there, she had only to find the right words to make them visible to a reader. I felt that these revisions were powerful, that the stanza took on movement and dimension:

> R-7
> In an empty schoolyard
> a child swings
> clutching/holding two braided, frayed ropes
> swaying back and forth (senses)
> on a scratchy board

. . . . . .

In an empty schoolyard
a child swings
clutching braided, frayed ropes (Touch)
while pigtails
rise and fall through the air.

Standing on a stage
an actor
looks upon the vast space (Sight)
of an empty theater
rehearsing his lines.

In a room of strangers
stand separately among others
speaking no words
until you find a message for yourself
and Peace Alone.

In a conference before the end of school, Andrea showed me the R-7 draft. I raised the question of how the final stanza fit with or ended the poem. I pointed out the voice change from "people" to "you", and voiced my confusion as to why she did that. In response to that conversation, this next journal entry was made, though three months after the writing of the R-7 revision. The entry speaks for itself:

> It took me a while to understand why this stanza didn't fit or was not understood by anyone except myself . . . It had nothing that directly related it to the other 3 stanzas and was pure "telling", the complete opposite of the other 3 "showing". Also, the "you find . . ." is confusing and a direct defiance of my wish to make this a third person work. Maybe I ought to continue the way I seemed to be writing about one person as he goes through life alone. But I have come to the end of the person's life alone, which leaves me one alternative: have the 4th stanza be the closing of the poem by using death, but have a feeling of peaceful eternity rest with the reader upon finishing the poem.
>
> One more problem — If I do this, will the reader understand that this isn't necessarily the same person? (It can't be! I have pigtails, actor, and an old man!)
>
> I want Pax Sola to be a poem that can be applied to everyone universally.
>
> Sitting in a meadow
> an old man listens,
> head cocked to one side
> as the chickadee
> warbles a song.

Points to Remember:

1. place where happening
2. person in situation
3. a verb with an accompanying adjective - noun
4. another noun
5. action verb

} Structure of the poem

Beneath winter snows
a soul (a lone soul)
flys ~~west~~ northward (to the universe)
&nd to Peace.
Alone.

Excellent! You are on the right track, how could you have missed it before - it seems so obvious! Now, seriously, why must I use winter? Perhaps because snow and cold seem so permanent and death seems more associated with cold winter . . . I just thought of something! Life, in relation to the seasons seems to me to be:

Spring in childhood
Summer is the prime of life coasting into mid-life
Fall is old age which ultimately leaves
Winter for death!

. . . a Final Question to think about: What do you think Peace Alone really is???

After this lengthy discussion with herself, Andrea fooled around with several variations of the fourth verse. Basically, she changed the word order and the placement of words on the line. The final effort was copied and sent off to a state-sponsored poetry contest. The fact that she did not win disappointed Andrea initially, but she continued to write. Just yesterday she came in with a new blotched COMPOSITIONS, sidled up to my desk with her pencil in hand and spoke.

"Mrs. I., do you have time to read my new poem?"

"Sure. What's the idea?"

"Oh, the idea is solid enough. I really want you to read what I have *written* about it."

What could I do but read it — and smile.

There was more than mere chance involved in Andrea's self-discovery of how writing and thinking are intrinsic to each other. Though the particular time and way it happened to her was not dictated or prescribed, there were activities presented and an atmosphere offered which she made maximum use of. In addition to the comments within the text of her story, I include here some of the activities and methods I used in class which contributed to

Andrea integrating the process in a wholly personal way. Some of the techniques are not peculiar to poetry, but generalized to the many styles and genres the writers in the class were experimenting with.

The atmosphere of the writing workshop was important. I felt it was essential to set the tone for serious exploration of ideas and thoughtful communication. For the first fifteen minutes of each class everyone wrote; I, right along with the students. I signalled the end of the independent time by reminding a student he had asked for a conference or by going over to a student and asking how the writing was going. This set the stage for conferencing and offered models to keep questions focused on the writing.

Questioning is the key to effective conferencing, and the backbone of the process. To help students formulate the right kinds of questions which help a writer focus his thinking toward clearer writing, we went through several activities. Interviewing proved beneficial in setting the proper mood for developing writing ideas which come from personal experience and observation. The student writers learned to stay with a topic and develop it with details gleaned from questioning. And because there was immediate feedback in this one-on-one, the writers learned quickly what worked and was interesting to an audience. They learned to listen critically for important specifics and to rely on themselves for clear, accurate wording.

Class brainstorming showed students the range of subject ideas, and then, I, as the Questioner, helped them relate personal experiences to general topics we had listed on the board. They saw questioning in a process which drew specifics from general ideas.

As a class, we did not limit brainstorming to topics for writing. In Andrea's class we spent part of every week talking *about* writing. We discussed what questions helped particular people go on when they were stuck, what kinds of issues and feedback were important for conferencing at different stages of writing. The students learned to accept the responsibility for their own communicating (written and oral) and to respect the differences of others. We avoided personality issues, for the most part, by emphasizing the importance of conferencing a piece of writing, not its author.

Because oral conferencing is not the only way to raise issues about a draft, the students also practiced writing out conferences. The writers were paired, read each others drafts, then chose one area of strength, one area that presented confusion or raised a question, and made one suggestion as a reader. These three findings were explained in separate paragraphs, with the appropriate specifics from the writing, for the writer to read and study. This

particular technique was especially helpful because it gave the students practice writing clearly about writing, practice in presenting ideas and critical reactions about writing for someone else to read and evaluate.

I also devised specific activities to deal with such issues as leads, finding titles, writing effective endings, finding active verbs to describe action, and eliminating clutter. These were especially helpful for Andrea and the other students working with poetry. Although all writing benefits from revising which builds strength and demonstrates clarity through simplified structure, poetry is the essence of brevity with meaning. We played lead and title games using our working drafts as sources for specifics. Revisions following the games often showed the writer's grasp of a tighter focus. The new drafts gave better direction for both reader and writer because the activities required them to look for lines, phrases, ideas which captured the writing's overall purpose.

One "search and find" mission we developed in class required the student writers to look for weak phrases, ineffective word combinations, and redundancies. They then went about revising on the spot with help from each other. What came out of these sessions was a sense of unity among the students, and an understanding of common problems in writing. The games were useful close to final draft stage, when the writer was concerned with paring phrasing and explanations to only essential words. It then became his conscious choice to add or delete words. The job of clarity was no longer accidental, but a clear choice of the writer.

I spent time individually and in small groups with poets of the class, concentrating on the importance of line choice, placement of words, indentation, length of phrases, all of which have the potential of double meaning in poetry. They learned to make choices for these based on purposeful ambiguities and a desire for the reader to see possibilities for meaning beyond what was explicitly stated.

Up to the time when I became aware of Andrea's journal, I had not used journals as a technique for teaching writing. Because of her success, and the success of several other students who "got wind" of her experiment, journals have now become an important element in my writing workshops. The activities which worked in discussions, have been adopted for practice and reflection in journals. They have become functional tools to improve each writer's perception of his own process of writing.

Thanks, Andrea.

Mt. Mansfield Union High School
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PAX SOLA
(Peace Alone)

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a child swings
clutching frayed ropes,
while braided pigtails
rise and fall through the air.

Standing on a stage
an actor
looks upon the vast space
of an empty theater
rehearsing his lines.

Sitting in a meadow
an old man listens,
head cocked to one side
as a chickadee
warbles a song.

From beneath winter snows
a soul of the universe
flies north
ever reaching for Peace
Alone.

Andrea Williams
Grade II

Information for Authors:

The Leaflet is published three times a year by the New England Association of Teachers of English, and prints articles on all facets and levels of English/Language Arts teaching. Now in its 82nd year, *The Leaflet* is the oldest of the journals dedicated to the teaching of English.

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Manuscripts: Manuscripts should be 3-15 pages in length, typed on non-erasable paper, doubled-spaced (including quotations), and footnotes should be avoided whenever possible by including documentation within the text. Send one copy (the original) to the editorial address below and keep a copy for yourself. A self-addressed, stamped (with sufficient postage) envelope should be included to insure return of the manuscript. If you wish acknowledgment of receipt of the manuscript, enclose a self-addressed, stamped postcard or send the manuscript by registered mail. A decision concerning the manuscript should be reached within six weeks.

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